

# THE Center for Education Reform



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## CONNECTICUT SCHOOL CHOICE MEASURE WITHDRAWN

(6/6/95) Today in Connecticut, the decision was made to withdraw from floor consideration the proposed school choice bill, which would, if enacted, provide local school districts with the option of having full district-wide choice. This was considered a modest measure, and as of today, the legislature reportedly had a majority of House votes to pass it, and a one-vote margin of support in the Senate.

Because the Senate's majority was so slim, however, Governor John Rowland and lawmakers withdrew the planned amendment, in the hopes that next year would yield a better return.

This is an enormous disappointment to many of us who have worked for two years on Connecticut education reform, and had faith that an idea supported by a majority of the Connecticut State legislature — and in fact, its citizens — would prevail.

As has occurred elsewhere, the Republican-led Senate had a number of its own party's detractors, and fence sitters. Rowland was not able to sway the Majority leader until the last days, but even with his sign on to a compromise measure, there was uncertainty among even the committed yes votes.

Rowland plans to make school choice his top priority next year. With the budget and other measures behind them until the year after next, there is the thought that he, and the legislators, will have more time to make this a high profile, and perhaps successful effort the next time around.

The passage of charter schools by the session's end tomorrow also does not look good. The bill being circulated is a relatively weak bill, allowing no more than 60% of per pupil costs to follow a child to a charter school. It is unlikely that the House will pass the measure in this form.

If you need more information, please give us a call, or contact Larry Cohen at the CT-based Yankee Institute at (203) 633-8188.

**NEXT WEEK:** Votes planned on school choice in Pennsylvania. Look for information in the Monthly Letter, due to reach you by June 15, or via fax alert if action is sooner.



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## **PRESS ALERT**

# **EDUCATION REFORM IN CONNECTICUT**

March 4, 1994

Hartford (CT): Today the Connecticut legislature begins hearings on a bill that will offer better educational opportunities to its children and empowerment to their parents and teachers. A bi-partisan group of legislators are sponsoring a comprehensive school reform bill that permits local districts to decide on school choice for their children. The bill also provides for the creation of Charter Schools and expanded alternative school programs and teacher certification options.

National experts and in-the-trenches educators from around the country will testify today between 2 and 5 pm on the effects of choice on their schools and their communities.

Testimony will be heard from: Mayor Bret Schundler of Jersey City, who is championing a pilot choice program for the children in his beleaguered public schools; Jose Arsenio Torres, Education Secretary of Puerto Rico, where the first comprehensive full choice program was implemented this past September; Piedad Robertson, Education Secretary of Massachusetts, a Charter School state; Clementina Duron, Principal of Jingle Town Charter Middle School, a predominantly Hispanic Charter School in California; and Stephen Tracy, former superintendent of New Milford who is now with The Edison Project.

This issue is one of the most potent in education reform today. The bill follows the direction of states such as Arizona, Texas, Florida, Kansas and New Jersey, all of which are considering or about to consider similar legislation at this time.

Jeanne Allen, President of the Center for Education Reform and a nationally recognized expert on the issues, will also be at the hearings, and will be available for interviews.

The Center for Education Reform is a national clearinghouse devoted to improving our nation's schools. We work to promote important reforms such as increased accountability, school choice, and charter schools, and can provide you with information, as well as local and national contacts on education reform. Please contact the Center at (202) 822-9000.



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## School Choice in Connecticut

Connecticut has perhaps the best chance of getting the camel's nose under the tent for school choice.

The state Majority leader, a respected Democrat by the name of Tom Luby, is heading the effort to allow communities to opt for school choice for low-income children. His proposals also include Charter Schools and alternative certification.

Luby is joined by Democrats Eddie Garcia, an Hispanic Representative of Hartford, and Andrea Brooks-Jackson, a Black Representative from New Haven. Both are determined to win school choice for their districts, and have spoken passionately about the subject. They are also talking to the mayors in their areas, who reportedly could jump on board.

The Republicans have also joined the fray, and but as in a number of other states, they are most unpredictable. Thus the coalitions supporting this effort, which includes the state's largest Catholic Parent Association, are hiring the most influential lobbyist for Republicans, Mr. Pat Sullivan, who also happens to be their chief fundraiser. This will help guarantee that all of the Republicans fall in line.

On the Democratic side, Luby is confident that he can get and may already have a majority of his colleagues. It would help the cause greatly if a lobbying for the Democrats could also be hired, but for now, they are focussing on Republicans. The good news is that they are bypassing the education committees, who are not permitted to consider legislation with fiscal implications this term.

The education reform package is scheduled to be introduced as an amendment to the state budget bill before they adjourn in May. Respected Senators on both sides of the aisle have already endorsed this effort and both Democratic and Republican gubernatorial candidates are getting ready to endorse the effort.

Page 2

The state's media has covered this well, although they naturally believe that school choice is far-fetched. Connecticut is on the verge of landmark legislation. Besides Arizona, Connecticut appears to be the only hope this year.

The Center for Education Reform has been assisting in drumming up press attention, bringing experts to testify to and working behind the scenes strategizing. The Wall Street Journal talked about Connecticut a few weeks ago at our request. Time is of the essence. If supporters there can get the financial assistance they need, they'll be off and running in a moment's notice. This one is really worth it. The bill may be modest, but the implications are enormous. Editorials and other information attached.



## State of Connecticut

February 15, 1994  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BLDG.  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106

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### TEST RESULTS DICTATE NEED FOR EDUCATION REFORM Increased funding hasn't increased learning

State House Majority Leader Tom Luby (D-Meriden), along with a bipartisan coalition of legislators, offered an education reform package today aimed at encouraging local decision making and innovation in redesigning how towns operate their school systems.

Luby believes 1993 test results showing only 20% of Connecticut students in grades four, six and eight meeting or exceeding statewide goals in reading, mathematics and writing make such reforms necessary. Test scores ranged from a low of 2.9% in the core cities to a high of 50.8% in the most affluent suburbs.

"These statistics make it abundantly clear that the time has come to reshape Connecticut's education system," says Luby. "We must move beyond debates focused solely on funding levels, because we have proven that simply increasing funds is not the complete answer."

At a State Capitol news conference, Luby along with House Minority Leader Edward Krawiecki (R-Bristol) and State Representatives Edwin Garcia (D-Hartford), Andrea Jackson-Brooks (D-New Haven), Brian Flaherty (R-Watertown), Barbara Ireland (D-Ridgefield), Paul Knierim (R-Simsbury), Robert Ward (R-Northford), Jim Amann (D-Milford) and Tim Barth (R-Naugatuck) and State Senator Martin Looney (D-New Haven) among others announced the following five topics of reform that focus on empowering children, their families, teachers and school boards.

\* **EMPOWERMENT SCHOLARSHIPS** - Enable local school boards to offer scholarships to qualified students to attend the participating public or private school of their choice.

\* **CHARTER SCHOOLS** - Allow the creation of special schools where teachers would be empowered to explore innovative teaching and learning methods.

\* **ZERO TOLERANCE** - Adopt a "zero tolerance" policy toward violence in schools as a disciplinary measure and set up alternative schools for offenders.

\* **ALTERNATIVE TEACHER CERTIFICATION** - Allow for a performance-based certification process and the creation of innovative recruitment and professional development for teachers.

\* **PROMOTE EDUCATION** - Develop public awareness campaign targeted at inner-city children promoting the idea that "school is cool".

"These recommendations, including school choice, will improve the quality of education in all schools," Krawiecki says. "When schools have to compete for students, it will force them to upgrade their curricula, the quality of their teaching and the learning environment in the classrooms."

"People need other options, and I feel charter schools in particular will offer more children a fair shot at available opportunities," Jackson-Brooks says. "Each community can decide if this is appropriate for them. Everyone should look closely at this legislation before passing judgement."

"Our school choice plan will give urban students immediate access to quality schools," says Ward, a Deputy Minority Leader. "Our plan will empower parents to choose the school that best meets their child's needs."

"As a representative of the inner city, I strongly believe a child should never be denied the American dream just because they are economically disadvantaged," says Garcia. "These proposals offer a real avenue toward that dream."

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## Fax Cover Sheet

To: Wanda

Fax Number: 317-297-0908

From: Jeanne Allen

Date: March 17, 1994

Pages including cover: 7

Message: Per conversation with Tim

*Thanks,  
J*